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Contested Legacies of the Late Middle Ages: Reason, Mystery and Participation in Jan Amos Comenius and Richard Baxter

1. Introduction

Jan Amos Comenius (1592-1670) is becoming well known as a universal reformer. Through his famous method of pansophia he aimed to institute not only a reform of education but also of the whole of European – and ultimately global – Church and society. Recently scholarship has begun to locate his thought more and more within a vibrant (Central) European tradition of Ramist and Lullist encyclopaedism, mediated especially through Johannes Piscator and Johann Heinrich Alsted, his teachers at the Herborn academy.¹ At the same time, as Jan Patočka insightfully recognised, Comenius was also deeply indebted to the traditions of fifteenth-century Realism and Platonism, not only that of the Hussites but also of Ramon de Sebonde and Nicholas of Cusa.²

Indeed, the work of Patočka himself, Jaromir Cervenka, Pavel Floss, Detlef Thiel and most recently Simon Kuchlbauer has pointed to Cusa especially as a major influence on Comenius' Trinitarian method and pansophia.³ Patočka speculated that Cusa's metaphysics may even have been the seed from which all of Comenius' philosophy unfolded.⁴ When we consider the fact that Comenius discovered Cusa as early as 1621,⁵ and that his influence registers prominently in his first encyclopaedic works,⁶ then such a suggestion can scarcely be ignored. Floss' ranking of Cusa, alongside Aristotle and Augustine, as chief among his formative influences, therefore seems

¹ For an insightful consideration of Comenius' connections to the twin movements of Ramism and universal reformation see Howard HOTSON, *The Ramist Roots of Comenian Pansophia*, in: Steven REID – Emma WILSON (eds.), *Ramus, Pedagogy and the Liberal Arts: Ramism in Britain and the Wider World*, Aldershot 2011, pp. 227-52.

² Jan PATOČKA, *Comenius und Cusanus*, in: Jan PATOČKA, *Andere Wege in die Moderne: Studien zur europäischen Ideengeschichte von der Renaissance bis zur Romantik*, ed. Ludger HAGEDORN, Würzburg 2006, pp. 238-40.

³ The bibliography is extensive but see especially PATOČKA, *Comenius und Cusanus*; Jan PATOČKA, *Centrum Securitatis und Cusanus*, in: PATOČKA, *Andere Wege in die Moderne*, pp. 245-56; Jan PATOČKA, *Transcendentalia a Kategorie*, in: Jan PATOČKA, *Sebrané spisy Jana Patočky: Komeniologické Studie III*, ed. Věra SCHIFFEROVÁ, Prague 2003, pp. 232-42; Jaromír ČERVENKA, *Die Naturphilosophie des Johann Amos Comenius*, Prague 1970, pp. 43-4, 59-61, 163-8; Pavel FLOSS, *Cusanus und Comenius*, *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 10, 1973, pp. 172-90; Detlef THIEL, *Zwischen phänomenologischem Sokratismus und ideengeschichtlicher Archäologie: Patočka und Cusanus*, in Ludger HAGEDORN – Hans Rainer SEPP (eds.), *Andere Wege in die Moderne: Forschungsbeiträge zu Patočkas Genealogie der Neuzeit*, ed. Ludger Hagerdorn, Würzburg 2006, pp. 37-59; Simon KUCHLBAUER, *Johann Amos Comenius' antisozinianische Schriften: Entwurf eines integrativen Konzepts von Aufklärung*, Dresden 2011, pp. 61-89, 197-221. I am extremely grateful to Petr Pavlas for providing me with a translation of Patočka's important article on the transcendentals.

⁴ PATOČKA, *Comenius und Cusanus*, pp. 238-40.

⁵ Jan Amos COMENIUS, *De Iterato Sociniano Irenico Iterata ad Christianos Admonitio*, Amsterdam 1661, pp. 117-9.

⁶ ČERVENKA, *Naturphilosophie*, pp. 43-4.

eminently justified.⁷ To alter Patočka's metaphor a little, we might even say that Cusa's insights provided the early seed around which his pansophia subsequently crystallised.

From his later Anti-Socinian works we know that Comenius' primary, and perhaps only, source for Cusa's works was the 1510 *Speculum Intellectuale Felicitatis Humanae* – a Cusan *florilegium* compiled by Ulrich Pinder, the noted Nuremberg humanist and physician.⁸ In this we may find, woven together into a harmonious whole, substantial portions of many of Cusa's most important works: *De Docta Ignorantia*, *De Conjecturis*, *De Filiatione Dei*, *De Dato Patris Luminum*, *De Beryllo*, *Idiota de Mente*, *De Venatione Sapientiae*, *De Mathematica Perfectione*, *De Ludo Globi* and *De Possest*.⁹ Significantly, from these Comenius could not only gain familiarity with the fundamentals of Cusa's metaphysics – especially the famous coincidence of opposites – but he could also probe its detailed application. As Kuchlbauer has recently demonstrated, building on Patočka's work, this Pinderan reception of Cusa thus proved vital for his developing Trinitarian model of pansophia.¹⁰

Another important exponent of Trinitarian method was the famous English Puritan theologian Richard Baxter (1615-91). While he has so far only been peripherally included in discussions of universal reformation, it is clear that he shared many of the same irenic and transformative impulses as Comenius. In fact, Baxter had important connections to Comenius' supporters in England and was clearly known to Comenius' inner circle. In the early 1650s Baxter was thus in correspondence with Comenius' Scottish associate John Dury concerning shared ecumenical projects, and especially the pioneering Worcestershire Association of ministers that Baxter had established – a model for the kind of intra-Protestant irenicism that Comenius and his circle stood for.¹¹ In 1658 Baxter wrote, on behalf of the Worcestershire Association, a short but important treatise to John Dury, offering practical advice on his project to unite the divided Protestant churches of Europe.¹² Notably, in the same year

⁷ FLOSS, *Cusanus und Comenius*, p. 190.

⁸ For more on Pinder see Catrien SANTING, *Through the Looking Glass of Ulrich Pinder: The Impact of Humanism on the Career of a Nuremberg Town Physician around 1500*, in: Stephen GERSH – Bert ROEST (eds.), *Medieval and Renaissance Humanism: Rhetoric, Representation and Reform*, Leiden 2003, pp. 203-20. For detailed discussion of the Cusan influence on Pinder see Ewald LASSNIG, *Dürer's "MELENCOLIA-I" und die Erkenntnistheorie bei Ulrich Pinder*, *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 57, 2008, pp. 51-95.

⁹ For a brief account of the contents see Stephan MEIER-OESER, *Die Präsenz des Vergessenen: Zur Rezeption der Philosophie des Nicolaus Cusanus vom 15. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert*, Münster 1989, p. 402. Jan PATOČKA, "Centrum Securitatis und Cusanus," in Jan PATOČKA, *Andere Wege in die Moderne*, p. 254 notes the inclusion of *De Ludo Globi* which is not in Meier-Oeser's list.

¹⁰ KUCHLBAUER, *Antisozinianische Schriften*, pp. 197-221. Jan PATOČKA, *Komenský – Kusánský – Descartes. Nedokončená monografie z pozůstalosti*, in: PATOČKA, *Komeniologické Studie III*, p. 258 argued that Comenius' triadism, as the "basic norm" of his pansophia, most likely derived from his reading of Cusanus. See further PATOČKA, *Comenius und Cusanus*.

¹¹ For discussion of Baxter's connection with Dury see Paul LIM, *In Pursuit of Purity, Unity and Liberty: Richard Baxter's Puritan Ecclesiology in Context*, Leiden 2004, pp. 195-212.

¹² Richard BAXTER, *The Judgment and Advice of the Assembly of the Associated Ministers of Worcestershire*, London 1658.

Peter Figulus, Comenius' son-in-law, wrote to Samuel Hartlib – the third of Hugh Trevor-Roper's "three foreigners"¹³ – expressing his longing to see Baxter's practical works.¹⁴

Even more important than these personal connections, however, was Baxter's own in-depth reading of the man he called "pious Comenius."¹⁵ Writing to Robert Boyle in 1665 Baxter remarked "he that will justly frame a Pansophie (as Commenius Calls it) must begin with Ontologie, of which God & man are the parts which we are most concerned to know."¹⁶ While Baxter, as we shall see below, diverged from Comenius on important points, his own philosophical development was profoundly influenced by Comenius' natural philosophy and pansophia.¹⁷ In fact, as he later recorded in his autobiography, it was his reading of Comenius that stimulated his own quest for a Trinitarian method.¹⁸ Like Comenius, and perhaps due to his influence,¹⁹ Baxter was also profoundly attracted to the Trinitarian metaphysics of Tommaso Campanella, as well as to the wider traditions of Ramism, Lullism and Christian encyclopaedism.²⁰ Indeed, David Sytsma is quite right to identify Campanella and Comenius as two of his most important early influences.²¹ At the same time Baxter's own philosophical and theological background meant that he was also deeply attuned to the traditions of late medieval scholasticism, especially the Scotist and Nominalist schools, and it is clear that this profoundly shaped his developing Trinitarian method.²²

Baxter's and Comenius' shared debt to the late Middle Ages brings us to the principal theme of this article. In recent years the question of the relation between late medieval and early modern thought has attained new prominence. This has occurred particularly due to the work of scholars such as Hans Blumenberg, Amos Funkenstein, Louis Dupré, Charles Taylor and Brad Gregory, who trace the onset of modernity to what they view as the late medieval decline of participationist metaphysics,

¹³ Hugh TREVOR-ROPER, *Three Foreigners: The Philosophers of the Puritan Revolution*, in TREVOR-ROPER: *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century: Religion, the Reformation and Social Change*, Indianapolis 2001, pp. 239-72 (<http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/719>. Accessed 9th April 2016).

¹⁴ LIM, *Pursuit*, p. 23.

¹⁵ Richard BAXTER, *A Christian Directory*, London 1673, III p. 919

¹⁶ Robert BOYLE, Baxter to Boyle, 14th June 1665, in: Michael HUNTER – Antonio CLERICUZIO (eds.), *The Correspondence of Robert Boyle*, 6 vols, Burlington VT 2001, vol. 2., p. 473. Cited from David SYTSMA, *Richard Baxter's Philosophical Polemics: A Puritan's Response to Mechanical Philosophy*, PhD Dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary 2013, p. 135. Sytsma's work provides important discussion of the philosophical and scientific milieu in which Baxter became familiar with Comenius on pp. 135-8, 142-8. I am very grateful to him for providing me with a copy of his dissertation.

¹⁷ For attempts to reconstruct this early influence see Simon J. G. BURTON, *The Hallowing of Logic: The Trinitarian Method of Richard Baxter's Methodus Theologiae*, Leiden 2012, pp. 60-3, 85-8 and SYTSMA, *Baxter's Philosophical Polemics*, pp. 135-48.

¹⁸ Richard BAXTER, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, London 1696, III pp. 69-70.

¹⁹ SYTSMA, *Baxter's Philosophical Polemics*, pp. 142-3 makes this intriguing suggestion.

²⁰ For discussion of Baxter in relation to Ramism, Lullism and universal reformation see BURTON, *The Hallowing of Logic*, pp. 45-94. An important, although in parts misleading, account of Baxter's relationship to Campanella can be found in Carl TRUEMAN, *A Small Step towards Rationalism: The Impact of the Metaphysics of Tommaso Campanella on the Theology of Richard Baxter*, in: Carl TRUEMAN – R. Scott Clark (eds.), *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment*, Carlisle 1999, pp. 181-95.

²¹ SYTSMA, *Baxter's Philosophical Polemics*, p. 142.

²² Baxter's enormous debt to late medieval scholasticism and its influence on his Trinitarian method is explored in-depth in BURTON, *The Hallowing of Logic*.

accelerated dramatically by the Protestant Reformation.²³ In light of this my article aims to pursue a detailed comparison of the theme of participation in Baxter and Comenius, concentrating on their different inheritances from late medieval and Renaissance thought and their ultimately divergent attitudes towards the kind of Neo-Platonism represented by Nicholas of Cusa.

Discussion will begin from their mature perspectives on Trinitarian metaphysics, as represented respectively by Comenius' unfinished *De Rerum Humanarum Emendatione Consultatio Catholica*, written between 1644 and 1664, and Baxter's *Methodus Theologiae Christianae* of 1681. Indeed, it is significant not only that both authors intended these works to stand as a kind of *summa* of their reform projects, but also that both works had their proximate origins in the context of Civil War England. For while Comenius' quest for Trinitarian reform clearly predates his visit to England in 1641, his *Consultatio Catholica* was profoundly shaped, and Dagmar Čapková argues largely inspired, by dialogue with the English Comenians. In similar vein, the ideas for Baxter's *Methodus* took early shape in his catechetical and ecumenical endeavours for the Worcestershire Association and came to fruition through his debates with the English Comenian Sir Matthew Hale.²⁴

Here the focus will be on Baxter's and Comenius' different appropriations of the Neo-Platonic metaphysics of light as an index to their different philosophical and theological commitments. While Comenius' relation to the metaphysics of light has been the topic of some important discussion,²⁵ this is scarcely true of Baxter. Yet their complex connection to this prominent medieval and Renaissance school of thought reveals important insights into their relationship. In the final section the focus will shift to the close inter-relation of their Trinitarian methods and the new horizons this opened up on the relation between faith and reason. In this way I will hope to show the manner in which different, contested legacies of the late Middle Ages were still playing out in the very different context of early modernity. On the one hand this will suggest that the theme of metaphysical participation was still very much alive and well in Protestant thought, a claim which could easily be substantiated for other prominent figures. On the other hand it will begin to point to the way in which a debt to late medieval

²³ See Hans BLUMENBERG, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, Cambridge MA, 1983; Amos FUNKENSTEIN, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century*, Princeton 1986; Louis DUPRÉ, *Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture*, New Haven 1993; Charles TAYLOR, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge MA, 2007; Brad GREGORY, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society*, Cambridge MA, 2012.

²⁴ The complex genesis of the *Consultatio Catholica* is explored in Vojtěch BALÍK – Věra SCHIFFEROVÁ, "Introduction to the General Consultation", in *DJAK* 19.1, pp. 35-50. Dagmar ČAPKOVÁ, *The Comenian Group in England and Comenius' Idea of Universal Reform*, AC 1 (XXV), 1969, pp. 25-34 discusses the English dimension of the *Consultatio*. For connection of the *Methodus* to catechesis, the Worcestershire Association and Sir Matthew Hale see BURTON, *Hallowing of Logic*, pp. 21-43, 109-16. Alan CROMARTIE, *Sir Matthew Hale, 1609-1676: Law, Religion and Natural Philosophy*, Cambridge 1995, pp. 202-3 points to the important influence of Comenius on Hale's natural philosophy and ontology.

²⁵ See Jan ROHLS, *Comenius, Light Metaphysics and Educational Reform*, in: Douglas HEDLEY – Sarah HUTTON (eds.), *Platonism at the Origins of Modernity: Studies on Platonism and Early Modern Philosophy*, Dordrecht 2008, pp. 63-74 and Jan ČÍŽEK, *Patricius-Alstedius-Comenius. A Few Remarks on Patricius' Reception in Early Modern Europe*, in: Tomáš NEJESCHLEBA – Paul Richard BLUM (eds.), *Francesco Patrizi: Philosopher of the Renaissance*, Olomouc 2014, pp. 372-84.

thought could lead to a definite toning-down of Neo-Platonic themes, accompanied by a wider covenantal reconfiguration of the notion of participation itself.

2. Comenius, Cusa and the Metaphysics of Light

In his mature work, Comenius' Trinitarian pansophia becomes founded on a discussion of divine possibility, and especially the possible world (*mundus possibilis*), which is the foundation of all of created reality. This possible world exists as a "systematic coordination of thoughts," providing the logical and intelligible structure on which real existence is grounded. Significantly, it exists not only in the mind of God but also of rational creatures.²⁶ This is already indicative of the important parallel between the divine and human mind which lies at the heart of all Comenius' thought. In particular, it hints at the power of the human mind to create and bring into being its own worlds, something that Guido Giglioni has highlighted as "one of the most original contributions of his metaphysics."²⁷ Nevertheless, Comenius makes it clear from the start that the possible worlds of angels and humans, although undoubtedly possessing their own integrity, ultimately derive their existence from the *mundus possibilis* of God himself.²⁸

Constituting the possible world are what Comenius referred to as the ideas of things, which he sometimes also refers to as their reasons, types or seals. These he defined as the "foreseen forms of things" which God, the divine craftsman, preconceives in his mind and according to which he creates the world. Following explicitly in a long tradition of Christian Platonism he described these ideas as invisible patterns, or archetypes, of visible things which they participate in and instantiate in their individual existence. In scholastic vein he also understood them in terms of multiple ways of imitating the divine essence.²⁹ Yet, as Floss points out, this similarity is also deceptive.³⁰ In fact Comenius distinguished three different ways in which the ideas could be said to exist. Firstly, they exist in themselves, which is to say in their own possibility. Secondly, they exist in the mind of God

²⁶ Jan Amos COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, t. I p. 199. Comenius' most extended discussion of the *mundus possibilis* can be found in *Consultatio*, t. I pp. 199-225. References to the *Consultatio* are given throughout in terms of page numbers and not column numbers.

²⁷ Guido GIGLIONI, *The Darkness of Matter and the Light of Nature: Notions of Matter in Bacon and Comenius and their Theological Implications*, AC 17, 2003, p. 21.

²⁸ COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, t. I p. 200.

²⁹ COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, t. I pp. 199-202. Here Comenius clearly identifies Plato as the first philosopher to highlight the importance of ideas. However, the Platonic ideas are only a launch-pad for Comenius' own reflections. In particular, he criticises Plato implicitly for failing to recognise the ideas as located in the divine mind. In this he follows the Christian Platonic tradition of the divine ideas, which itself had its roots in Middle Platonic revisions of Plato's thought. In Jan Amos COMENIUS, *Pansophiae Prodromus*, Leiden 1644, pp. 64-7 he describes God in scholastic terms as the form and exemplar of his creatures, holding that all things exist through participation in their divine, archetypal ideas. He also connects the divine ideas to the imitability of the divine essence in a manner reminiscent of Thomas AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a q. 15.2. Comenius' important connection to medieval and Reformed scholasticism has been noted by Emidio CAMPI, *Jan Amos Comenius and the Protestant Theology of His Time*, in: Emidio CAMPI, *Shifting Patterns of Reformed Tradition*, Göttingen 2014, pp. 259-84 and KUCHLBAUER, *Antisozinianische Schriften*, pp. 197-200, 249-51 among others.

³⁰ Pavel FLOSS, *Cusanus und Comenius*, *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 10, 1973, p. 181

the craftsman who sees this possibility. Thirdly, they exist as realised in finite, material creatures. According to the first mode they are said to be eternal, but not, importantly, according to the second or third.³¹

In order to grasp Comenius' complex understanding we must understand that running through his discussion of the possible world is an important dialectic between divine Idea and ideas. In his infinite simplicity God from eternity had himself as the "Idea of his works." Indeed, this Idea is nothing but God himself. Yet God, having as himself the "most perfect Idea" of every perfection, expresses this in multiple ideas which can be understood as distinct thoughts preconceived in the divine mind. To put it slightly differently, in themselves, which is to say "in their own possibility," the ideas are eternal and identical with God himself, yet as viewed in the mind of the divine craftsman apprehending this possibility they must be regarded as a mean between Creator and creation. In this sense Comenius describes the ideas as "a certain channel, through which the infinite begins to contract itself into the form of some finite, but in an immutable fashion." Citing what he calls the beautiful words of a "certain of the philosophers," he adds that the "ideas of things are in God as triangles or other figures are made from a circle." In eternity God is to be considered as an infinite circle or line who produces a creature through contracting himself into finite lines and figures.³²

Comenius' geometrical examples recall those found in Nicholas of Cusa's famous *De Docta Ignorantia*, a number of which he had in fact earlier drawn on in his polemic against the Anti-Trinitarians. For in this work Cusa explicitly compares the relation of God and creatures both to the convertibility of an infinite and finite line and to the circle's enfolding of all finite figures.³³ Moreover, Comenius' language of contraction closely echoes that of Cusa himself who held that all creatures must be understood as finite contractions of the infinite God.³⁴ As the "Form of forms" and "reason of reasons" – terms found in the *Pansophiae Prodrumus* and *Consultatio* – God himself must

³¹ COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, t. I p 200.

³² COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, t. I p 202: "Neque Deus Creator sunt, neque creaturae iam essentia donatae: sed medium quid. Probat: quia in essentia DEI omnia sunt infinite ac immutabiliter, in essentia vero Creaturae omnia finite ac mutabiliter. At in Ideis neutrum horum, sed medium quid. Nempe Ideae sunt Canalis quidam, per quem infinitum contrahere se incipit in alicuius finiti formam, sed immutabiliter: quia Idea, quails fit, talis manet immutabiliter. Hinc pulchre quidam divine philosophantium dixit: Ideae rerum in Deo sunt, ut ex Circulo facti Trianguli, vel aliae figurae. Deus nempe in aeternitate sua veluti Circulus infinitus, aut linea interminabilis est: sed quando Creaturam (etiam ipsa Cogitatione) producit, per impressionem illi terminorum (quid, qualis, quanta, quando, ubi etc. esse debeat) producit: et qualem producit, talis manet, Triangulus triangulus etc."

³³ NICHOLAS OF CUSA, *De Docta Ignorantia*, 1.13.35; 3.1.188, 3.4.206, in: Raymond KLIBANSKY – Ernest HOFFMANN (eds.), *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia* [hereafter NCOO], Leipzig 1932–, vol. I, pp. 25–7, 122, 132; cf. Jan Amos COMENIUS, *De Irenico Irenicorum*, Amsterdam 1660, pp. 72–4 and *De Iterato Sociniano*, pp. 117–9. At least two of these Cusan examples are to be found in Ulrich Pinder, *Speculum Intellectuale Felicitatis Humanae*, Nüremberg 1510, fol. 22, 28, 31, the compilation which Comenius explicitly identifies as his source in *De Iterato Sociniano*.

³⁴ CUSA, *De Docta Ignorantia*, 1.2.6–7 (NCOO I, pp. 7–8). See further, Jasper HOPKINS, *Nicholas of Cusa's Metaphysic of Contraction*, Minneapolis MN, 1983 and Clyde MILLER, *Reading Cusanus: Metaphor and Dialectic in a Conjectural Universe*, Washington DC, 2003, pp. 32–110.

therefore be considered the exemplar of all his creatures.³⁵ It is true that in his later works Cusa qualifies this understanding of God as exemplar or Idea, denying that the term can have proper reference to him.³⁶ Yet Comenius too was insistent that our language can have no proper purchase on God, endorsing the same kind of rigorous negative theology as Cusa himself.³⁷

In fact, it seems likely that Comenius' very equation of the divine Idea with the pure possibility of the divine essence derives from Cusa himself. For in his later *De Possest*, which was an important work for Comenius, Cusa broke away definitely from the scholastic doctrine of God – and in part from his own earlier works – claiming that God was not only pure act but also pure potentiality or possibility, implying the radical conclusion that he is “actually every possible being.”³⁸ Clarifying this, Cusa explained that God as “Absolute Possibility” enfolds all things, such that every created being represents an unfolding of this possibility.³⁹ In fact, it is in the *De Possest* that we find Cusa explicitly drawing on the Idea/ideas dialectic. Here he illustrates this with his famous example of the spinning top, arguing that the coincidence of motion and rest in an infinitely rotating top can be seen to parallel the “eternal forms of things,” which coincide in the divine “actualised-possibility” but are distinct as found in things.⁴⁰ Notably it was this very same example that Comenius drew on in his polemic against the Anti-Trinitarian Daniel Zwicker in order to illustrate the divine coincidence of opposites.⁴¹

It is also just such an insight that lies at the heart of Comenius' own conception of the possible world, and elsewhere in his works we also find him drawing on the Cusan language of enfolding and unfolding in important ways.⁴² Of course, Cusa himself emphatically denied that the ideas could be

³⁵ Nicholas of CUSA, *De Visione Dei*, 7.26 (NCOO VI, p. 27) and *De Docta Ignorantia*, 1.23.70 (NCOO I, p. 46); cf. COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, t. I p. 237 and *Pansophiae Prodromus*, p. 64.

³⁶ Nicholas of CUSA, *De Li Non Aliud*, 10.38-9 (NCOO XIII, pp. 22-3) criticises both Plato's conception of the ideas and even the use of the term 'idea' with reference to God. However, Nicholas of CUSA, *De Venatione Sapientiae*, 1.1.3 (NCOO XII, pp. 5-6), which was written a year later in 1463, concedes that properly understood Plato's own doctrine of ideas may have been closer to the truth than that of his “inept interpreters.” As K. Meredith ZIEBART, *Nicolaus Cusanus on Faith and the Intellect: A Case-Study in 15th-Century Fides-Ratio Controversy*, Leiden 2014, pp. 222-6 points out, Cusa's Realist position on universals – and thus ideas as participable – represents a clear synthesis of Plato and Aristotle.

³⁷ COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, t. I p. 237 and *De Christianorum Uno Deo, Patre, Filio et Spiritu Sancto*, Amsterdam 1659, 13.1-3 (pp. 11-13). Comenius' language in *De Christianorum Uno Deo* notably echoes Nicholas of CUSA, *Dialogus de Possest*, 21 (NCOO XI/2, pp. 26-7) which he knew from PINDER, *Speculum Intellectuale*, fol. 31.

³⁸ CUSA, *De Possest*, 8 (NCOO XI/2, pp. 8-9). For Comenius' discussion of God in terms of divine possibility and as “possible omniform essence,” see *Consultatio*, t. I pp. 199-202, 245-6. Comenius' use of the *De Possest*, via his Pinderan source, is discussed in KUCHLBAUER, *Antisozinianische Schriften*, pp. 211-13.

³⁹ CUSA, *De Possest*, 14-17 (NCOO XI/2, pp. 17-22).

⁴⁰ CUSA, *De Possest*, 22-3 (NCOO XI/2, pp. 27-9).

⁴¹ COMENIUS, *De Iterato Sociniano*, p. 119. The passage in question can be found in PINDER, *Speculum Intellectuale*, fol. 31. The importance of the Cusan motif of the spinning wheel to Comenius is brilliantly elucidated in PATOČKA, *Centrum Securitatis und Cusanus*, pp. 245-56 and is also explored in KUCHLBAUER, *Antisozinianische Schriften*, pp. 211-13.

⁴² See, for example, Jan Amos COMENIUS, *Physicae ad Lumen Divinum Reformatae Synopsis*, Leipzig 1633, “Prolegomena”, p. 4; *Didactica Magna*, 5.5, in *Opera Didactica Omnia*, Amsterdam 1657, col. 27; *Delineatio*, 51, in *Pansophiae Diatyposis Ichnographica et Orthographica Delineatione*, Amsterdam 1645, p. 155; and *Triertium Catholicum*, 3.22 in *DJAK* 18, pp. 262-3.

considered as any kind of mean between Creator and created.⁴³ Rather, Comenius' two-tier conception of divine ideas seems to combine the Cusan Idea, as the infinite, divine pattern which all creatures model in their finite, contracted ways, with the Augustinian-Stoic doctrine of seminal reasons which he frequently employs elsewhere in his works.⁴⁴ It also appears much closer to the older Neo-Platonic paradigm, evident also in Francesco Patrizi, according to which the divine ideas represent the first rays of the divine light sent out to illuminate the world.⁴⁵

For Comenius, following a Cusan paradigm, the world enfolded in God becomes unfolded in time and space. In this the Triune motion of God within his own being becomes directed outside of himself and channelled through the divine ideas. As he explains:

The mind from itself, through itself and in itself existing is God, eternal thought, speech and act. (For whence would these three be in created minds, if not rivulets flowing from their eternal font?). By thinking inside himself whatever he was able to, was knowing and was willing to be thought, he found the possible world and foresaw all things which were able to be with order and truth. By speaking with himself (eternal Wisdom with eternal Power and Love) concerning these things he created the eternal laws of things, or the ideal world. By acting outside himself he produced the real world separately existing.⁴⁶

Here the possible world correlates with the divine possibility, the ideal world with the divine knowing and the real world with the divine will. In this we are surely justified in seeing Comenius' three levels of the divine ideas. What this also means is that the divine ideas become expressed in the world according to a Trinitarian pattern of power, knowledge and will. Whereas in scholastic thought and

⁴³ CUSA, *De Li Non Aliud*, 10.38 (NCOO XIII, p. 22) explicitly attacks Plato's understanding that the ideas are "prior to things but posterior to God."

⁴⁴ COMENIUS, *Didactica Magna*, 5.8-13 *Opera*, col. 28-30 draws on the Stoic doctrine of the "seeds of arts" and "seeds of virtues" to be found in CICERO, *Tusculanae Disputationes*, III.1 and SENECA, *De Beneficiis*, IV.6. As is well known, this is a prominent theme in Comenius' works. Intriguingly, Comenius' fusing of the divine ideas and seminal reasons resembles the primordial causes of Johannes Scotus Eriugena (John O'MEARA, *Eriugena*, Oxford 2002, pp. 121-35). At the same time it is worth noting that Comenius' distinction between Idea and ideas also resembles the Cusan distinction between the uncreated, eternal possibility and the created, perpetual "possibility of becoming" (*posse fieri*). Compare COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, t. I p. 200 with CUSA, *De Venatione Sapientiae*, 1.3.7-8 (NCOO XII, pp. 9-11).

⁴⁵ Luc DEITZ, *Space, Light and Soul in Francesco Patrizi's Nova de Universis Philosophia*, in: Anthony GRAFTON – Nancy SIRAISI (eds.), *Natural Particulars: Nature and the Disciplines in Renaissance Europe*, Cambridge MA, 1999, pp. 139-57. For the influence of Patrizi on Comenius see Jan ČÍŽEK, *Patricius-Alstedius-Comenius. A Few Remarks on Patricius' Reception in Early Modern Europe*, in: Tomáš NEJESCHLEBA – Paul Richard BLUM (eds.), *Francesco Patrizi: Philosopher of the Renaissance*, Olomouc 2014, pp. 372-84.

⁴⁶ COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, t. I p. 219: "*Mens a seipso, per seipsum, in seipso existens, Deus est, aeternum Cogitans, aeternum Loquens et Agens. (Unde enim tria illa in nobis creatis Mentibus essent, si non rivuli a suo aeterno fonte fluerunt?). Cogitando enim intra Seipsum quicquid cogitari poterat, sciebat, volebat, invenit Mundum Possibilem, praevisa scilicet omnia quae esse poterant cum Ordine et Veritate sua. Loquendo autem de his cum seipso (Sapientia aeterna cum Potentia et Amore aeterno) condidit Rerum leges aeternas, sive Mundum Ideale. Agendo vero extra se quicquid agi potuit, produxit Mundum Realem seorsim existentem.*"

much of Platonism the ideas tend to be conceived more or less as static exemplars, for Comenius they become fruitful and dynamic forms with their own intrinsic dynamism and potentiality.⁴⁷

According to Comenius it is the nature of physical light to turn outward, unfold and reveal itself.⁴⁸ For him this is just as true of the divine light which is God himself, save that here illumination is itself the imparting of existence. Indeed, Comenius' own appropriation of this metaphor, which invokes the Neo-Platonic concept of the "good diffusive of itself," even leads him to argue – against the orthodox grain – that some kind of creation is necessary to God.⁴⁹ Moreover, Comenius' insistence that God can only act in the most excellent way possible seems to commit him to the view that this world is the best of all possible worlds. Thus responding to the scholastic question whether God thought of the divine ideas freely, he argues along the lines that if there were other possible ideas of perfection not instantiated then God would not be most perfect.⁵⁰ In arguing this he also makes a daring correlation between the inner dynamic of the Trinity and the emanation of creation. Creation becomes simply the outpouring of the Triune light of God himself, in which the Father is considered the radiator of all things, the Son the ray of light in whom their existence shines out and the Holy Spirit the heat that gives them life and binds them together into union both with themselves and with the Triune God.⁵¹ Just as the sun by shining illuminates others and yet remains most lucid in itself, so God in creating and perfecting all things remains undiminished and most perfect in himself.⁵²

Summarising Comenius' understanding we might say that the Triune light of God unfolds itself on a twofold ontological axis. Firstly, following the classic Neo-Platonic emanation model, it expresses itself vertically as a progressive shadowing of light which terminates in the darkness of non-being. Secondly, it expresses itself both vertically and horizontally through a kind of triadic multiplication.⁵³ Channelled through the divine ideas creation itself bears the dynamic impress of the Triune Power,

⁴⁷ This pattern closely matches Campanella's primalities of Power, Wisdom and Love. As is well known, Comenius refers to his significant debt to Campanella in a number of his early works (COMENIUS, *Synopsis*, "Praefatio" and *Pansophiae Prodomus*, p. 84). For more on Campanella's influence on Comenius see Matteo Raffaelli, *Macht, Weisheit, Liebe: Campanella und Comenius als Vordenker einer friedvoll globalisierten Weltgemeinschaft*, Frankfurt am Main 2009. The relationship between Cusan and Campanellan metaphysics in Comenius is something that Raffaelli has left largely unexplored. Significantly, Campanella's dynamic conception of the divine ideas also finds important precedent in the Lullist tradition and the Platonism of the twelfth-century School of Chartres, both of which were also important sources for Cusa. See further, LOHR, *Metaphysics*, 537-57; Peter ELLARD, *The Sacred Cosmos: Theological, Philosophical and Scientific Conversations in the Twelfth-Century School of Chartres*, Scranton PA, 2008; and David ALBERTSON, *Mathematical Theologies: Nicholas of Cusa and the Legacy of Thierry of Chartres*, Oxford 2014.

⁴⁸ Jan Amos COMENIUS, *Panaugia*, 2.1 in *DJAK* 19.1, p. 192 and *The Way of Light*, tr. Ernest Campagnac, London 1938, p. 52.

⁴⁹ COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, t. I pp. 215-16, 241 and *De Christianorum Uno Deo*, 10 (p. 8).

⁵⁰ COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, t. I p. 202.

⁵¹ See, for example, passages in COMENIUS, *De Christianorum Uno Deo*, 27.2, 28.3, 29.6, 30.8 (pp. 43, 45, 52, 56-7).

⁵² COMENIUS, *De Christianorum Uno Deo*, 6, 29.5 (pp. 4, 52).

⁵³ For a clear exposition of the vertical and horizontal axes in terms of the metaphysics of light see COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, t. I pp. 211, 239-46. This pattern of vertical and horizontal triadic ramifications resembles Patrizi in important ways (DEITZ, *Space, Light and Soul*, pp. 140-3).

Wisdom and Love of God. For Comenius this becomes apparent first of all in the triad of matter, light and spirit created by God as the “first characters of his eternal majesty.”⁵⁴ Here light as the highest and most active principle mirrors the Trinity in both its character as intrinsically self-moving and diffusing and its threefold action of motion, illumination and calefaction. As self-diffusive it expresses itself downwards through spirit to inactuate and inform matter, yet at the same time the potentiality of matter reaches upwards through spirit to its own activation in light.⁵⁵ In this way the scholastic dialectic of potency and act is transformed into a trinitarian relationship of potency, act and their mediating union, a pattern, which Floss points out, derives from Cusa himself.⁵⁶

While matter, light and spirit represent a basic analogue of the Trinity for Comenius, they are far from the only triad in his metaphysical system. For he held that in creating, divine Power, Wisdom and Love multiplied itself throughout all creation, becoming reflected in the unity, truth and goodness intrinsic to every individual being. Moreover, he held that each of these themselves become subject to triadic – or rather Trinitarian – multiplication, with unity giving rise to place, time and quantity, truth to quality, action and passion and goodness to order, use and amiability – his own Trinitarian revision of Aristotle’s Categories of being.⁵⁷ Moreover, to complicate the picture further, Comenius was clear that each of these singulars also unfolds into a further trinity, meaning that space, time and all that they encompass are given a dynamic Trinitarian and relational structure.⁵⁸ It is well known that in expounding this “Trinitarian World-Picture”⁵⁹ Comenius drew deeply on the metaphysics of Tomasso Campanella. Yet, as Charles Lohr suggests, this new, dynamic metaphysics of the Renaissance itself had its roots in the works of Nicholas of Cusa and especially in Ramon Lull, who held that all being and activity mirrored God as its ground according to Trinitarian moments of activity which he called correlatives.⁶⁰ Ultimately such an understanding derived, through Jewish,

⁵⁴ COMENIUS, *De Christianorum Uno Deo*, 17.1 (p. 17)

⁵⁵ These themes are prominent as early as COMENIUS, *Synopsis*, 1-3 (pp. 7-34). In their mature expression in COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, t. I pp. 297-306 this triad of matter, light and spirit has been successfully integrated into Comenius’ Cusan metaphysics of possibility. Both ČERVENKA, *Naturphilosophie*, pp. 43-4, 59-61, 163-8 and especially FLOSS, *Cusanus und Comenius*, pp. 174-80 point to the intimate connection between Cusa and Comenius’ natural philosophy.

⁵⁶ FLOSS, *Cusanus und Comenius*, pp. 174-5. Floss especially emphasises Comenius’ use of Cusan metaphysics to overcome the duality of the Aristotelian worldview. He draws attention to Cusa’s reworking of the Aristotelian concept of privation. ZIEBART, *Cusanus on Faith and the Intellect*, pp. 201-35 offers a much more positive assessment of Cusa’s relation to Aristotelian philosophy. Nevertheless, she still regards Cusa as seeking to revise Aristotle’s concepts of privation and potency-act in fundamental ways.

⁵⁷ COMENIUS, *Triertium Catholicum*, 8.7, in DJAK 18, p. 283 makes fully explicit his desire for a Trinitarian revision of Aristotle’s Predicaments.

⁵⁸ One of the clearest discussions of this is to be found in COMENIUS, *De Christianorum Uno Deo*, 25.8-23 (pp. 32-9).

⁵⁹ I am borrowing the phrase from Robert PRING-MILL, *The Trinitarian World-Picture of Ramon Lull*, *Romanistisches Jahrbuch* 7, 1955, pp. 229-56.

⁶⁰ Charles LOHR, *Metaphysics*, in: Charles SCHMITT – Quentin SKINNER (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, Cambridge 2003, pp. 537-57. For a detailed exploration of Cusa’s relation to the Lullist tradition see Eusebio COLOMER, *Nikolaus von Kues und Raimund Llull: Aus Handschriften der Kueser Bibliothek*, Berlin 1961. COMENIUS, *De Christianorum Uno Deo*, 25.17 (p. 35) displays his implicit grasp of the doctrine of correlatives in the triad of *emanatio*, *transmanatio* and *immanatio*. In *Consultatio*, t. I pp. 219,

Christian and Islamic Neo-Platonism, from Proclus' triadic metaphysics in which every being could be considered as existing within itself, moving out of itself and returning to itself.⁶¹

For Comenius, as we touched on above, creatures are paradoxically both the presence and privation of the light of God. In order to understand this we must invoke Cusa's famous principle of the coincidence of opposites, according to which God is held to transcend the Aristotelian principle of non-contradiction, so that in him opposites coincide without opposition and thus without contradiction.⁶² Recently Kuchlbauer has traced in detail Comenius' important use of this principle in his Anti-Socinian works. This centres on three Cusan motifs: the coincidence of an infinite circle and line, the coincidence of the centre and circumference of an infinite circle and the coincidence of rest and infinite motion.⁶³ Significantly, each of these three examples also recur in Comenius' discussion of the relation between God and creation. The first we have already seen in our discussion of the divine ideas. The second is found prominently in Comenius, most famously in his *Centrum Securitatis*, where he compares God to an infinite circle "whose centre is everywhere and circumference truly nowhere."⁶⁴ In the *Consultatio* this leads Comenius to suggest that God is the "eternal principal centre of every created circumference." Dovetailing this with the third example he describes creation as "a commotion from his centre of omnipotence" in which infinite motion and rest both coincide.⁶⁵

246 he employs triadic language (e.g. *eligens, eligibile, electio*) to illustrate the coincidence-in-distinction of *esse-agere-pati*. This follows the pattern of both Lull's correlatives and Cusa's principle of the coincidence of opposites.

⁶¹ For an in-depth exploration of Proclan triadic Neo-Platonism see Stephen GERSH, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition*, Leiden 1978. The connection between Lullism and Jewish, Christian and Islamic Neo-Platonism is explored in Harvey HAMES, *The Art of Conversion: Christianity and the Kabbalah in the Thirteenth Century*, Leiden 2000; Frances YATES, *Ramon Lull and John Scotus Erigena*, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 23, 1960, pp. 1-44 and LOHR, *Metaphysics*, 540-2 respectively. Despite the clear links between Cusa and Proclus, LOHR, *Metaphysics*, pp. 556-7 recognises an important break between the "dialectical constructions of ancient metaphysics" apparent in Proclus and the "dynamic systems of modern times" inaugurated by Lull and Cusa. Significantly for our discussion below, he identifies the key turning point as Cusa's coincidence of opposites.

⁶² The literature on this is vast but see especially Kurt FLASCH, *Die Metaphysik des Einen bei Nikolaus von Kues*, Leiden 1973; Rudolph HAUBST, *Streifzüge in die Cusanische Theologie*, Münster 1991, pp. 117-40 and MILLER, *Reading Cusanus*, pp. 5-6, 18-24, 161-6. F. Edward CRANZ, *Reason and Beyond Reason in Nicholas of Cusa*, in CRANZ, *Nicholas of Cusa and the Renaissance*, ed. Thomas Izbicki and Gerald Christianson, Aldershot 2000, pp. 21-30 helpfully traces a number of important stages in the development of Cusa's doctrine on the coincidence of opposites.

⁶³ COMENIUS, *De Irenico Irenicorum*, pp. 72-4 and *De Iterato Sociniano*, pp. 117-9; cf. Pinder, *Speculum Intellectuale*, fol. 22, 31. These diagrams reference CUSA, *De Docta Ignorantia*, 1.13 (NCOO I, pp. 25-7) and *De Possest*, 18-24 (NCOO XI/2, pp. 23-30). For extensive discussion of these examples see Kuchlbauer, *Antisozinianische Schriften*, pp. 205-13.

⁶⁴ Jan Amos COMENIUS, *Centrum Securitatis*, "Praefatio", in DJAK 3, pp. 478-9: "Atque tale est primum illud et ultimum, summum et imum, principio, medio et fine carens, ex se, per se, in se existens, increatum, incomprehensibile, incorruptibile, aeternae beatum ens, benedictus et adorandus Deus noster: quem sapienter sapientum quidam circulum esse dixit, cuius centrum ubique est, circumferentia vero nusquam."

⁶⁵ COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, t. I pp. 246-7: "Centrum aeternum principium toti Circumferentiae creatae. Momentum aeternum (commotio Omnipotentiae e suo centro) initium omnibus illis Creaturarum quos videmus motibus."

Recalling the traditional metaphysics of light, in which the motion of light itself was held to be infinite, Comenius can therefore claim that the Triune light of God is simultaneously at rest and in infinite motion.⁶⁶ This is true both within himself – where this coincidence of opposites can be taken to capture the inner dynamic of the Trinity – and in his motion outside himself in the creation of the world. The Triune light of God is therefore diffused instantaneously, as if from a point outside of space and time, into space and time – an image which recalls the light metaphysics of Dante and Grosseteste.⁶⁷ Indeed, as we have seen, space and time and all they contain are the unfolding of its light. For in its infinite motion it imparts light and existence to all things, shining within them from the very centre of their being. Yet at the same time the light of God remains within itself, undiminished and unchanged and separate from all time and space. Creatures are therefore both the rays and the shadows of this paradoxical divine light – they both reveal it and at the same time reveal that they are nothing like it. Indeed, that in comparison to it they are nothing but darkness.⁶⁸

3. Baxter's Scholastic Approach to the Metaphysics of Light

For Richard Baxter, following the fourth-century theologian Ephrem the Syrian, God was “that three named fire of the Holy Trinity.”⁶⁹ Throughout his discussion of the nature of God he recurs again and again to the theme of light and fire. In this he was clearly influenced by a long tradition of Christian reflection rooted in both the scriptural affirmation of God as Light and the Nicene formulation of generation of the Son from the Father as “light from light.” Like the Greek Fathers who influenced him, it was the identity and distinction of light from itself which particularly fascinated him as an analogue for the Trinity. This he certainly recognised in the common analogy of the relation between light and its rays, adapted by Comenius as we saw above, but much more important to him was the comparison between the motion, light and heat of fire and the intra-Trinitarian dynamics.⁷⁰

For Baxter motion, light and heat were to be considered as distinct from each other but inseparably united in the substance of fire. The intrinsic motion of fire produced light and together motion and light gave rise to heat. This meant that what he called the triune (or *una-trina*) virtue of fire could be directly related to the Trinity.⁷¹ Indeed, for Baxter the nature of fire could even be deployed as justification for following Duns Scotus in attributing a formal distinction to the persons of the Trinity – a much debated issue – or as (implicit) support of the *filioque* clause concerning the Holy Spirit's

⁶⁶ COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, t. I p. 246.

⁶⁷ For accounts of the metaphysics of light in Robert Grosseteste and Dante Alighieri see James McEVOY, *The Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste*, Oxford 1986 and Christian MOEVS, *The Metaphysics of Dante's Comedy*, New York 2005, pp. 17-21; cf. ROHLS, *Comenius, Light Metaphysics and Educational Reform*, pp. 63-74 and ČÍŽEK, *Patricius-Alstedius-Comenius*, pp. 372-84.

⁶⁸ COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, t. I pp. 211, 246-7.

⁶⁹ Richard BAXTER, *Methodus Theologiae Christianae*, London 1681, I p. 99.

⁷⁰ See, for example, BAXTER, *Methodus*, I pp. 80, 89, 99, 102. The Fathers that Baxter cites include Cyril of Alexandria, Gregory Nazianzen, Macarius, Ephrem the Syrian and John Damascene. Among contemporary authorities he includes Bernardino Telesio, Francesco Patrizi and René Descartes.

⁷¹ BAXTER, *Methodus Theologiae*, I pp. 3, 80.

procession from the Father *and* the Son – an even more debated question!⁷² One could even go so far as to say that his own Scotist-inspired approach to the divine persons of the Trinity in terms of absolute principles rather than Thomist subsistent relations was influenced by his subtle appreciation of the intrinsic character of light.⁷³

Certainly it is clear that his own biblical model of the Trinity as the interplay of Life, Light and Love was intimately connected to the motion, splendour and heat of light.⁷⁴ Citing the fifteenth-century Greek scholastic Gennadius Scholarius, who was also attracted to a Scotist metaphysical framework,⁷⁵ Baxter remarks:

We believe from the nature of God to rise the Logos or Word and the Spirit, just as from fire light and heat exist. And in the same manner as fire ... which is shining and heating from itself, yet through itself always has light and heat and from these both emits to us. Also in the same manner, before the foundations of the world were being laid, there were the Word and the Spirit, natural actions of God. Since God is MIND, just as was before said. These three MIND, WORD and SPIRIT, are one GOD.⁷⁶

⁷² BAXTER, *Methodus Theologiae*, I p. 168. For Duns Scotus' discussion of the formal distinction in the Trinity see John Duns SCOTUS, *The Examined Report of the Paris Lecture: Reportatio I-A. Latin Text and English Translation*, tr. Allan Wolter and Oleg Bychkov, New York 2004, d. 33 q. 2 n. 63, 75; q. 3 n. 90-2 (II pp. 330, 334, 337-9). BAXTER, *Methodus Theologiae*, I. p. 21 also clearly advocates the application of the formal distinction to the Trinity. Hester GELBER, *Logic and the Trinity: A Clash of Values in Scholastic Thought, 1300-1335*, PhD Dissertation, University of Wisconsin 1974, pp. 71-86 and Stephen DUMONT, *Duns Scotus' Parisian Question on the Formal Distinction*, *Vivarium* 43:1, 2005, pp. 7-62 have both argued for a change in the way that Scotus understood this distinction during his career, between a more Realist account in Oxford and a later, less Realist, account in Paris. If this is so it is possible that Baxter's own refusal to pin down the precise nature of the formal distinction and his preference for characterising it extrinsically might reflect his sympathy for the latter account (see BURTON, *Hallowing of Logic*, pp. 11, 14-15, 128, 146, 160, 164, 241, 277-80 for discussion of his "Nominalised-Scotism"). In any case, what is most important as Isabel IRIBARREN argues persuasively in *Durandus of St Pourçain: A Dominican Theologian in the Shadow of Aquinas*, Oxford 2005, pp. 78-84 is Scotus' advocacy of a middle distinction between the rational and the real. Baxter clearly shares the recognition of the need for such a distinction in unfolding the nature of the Trinity and the *vestigia Trinitatis*.

⁷³ Baxter, *Methodus Theologiae*, I pp. 92-3, 109, 119-23 expresses a clear preference for a Scotist account of persons as absolute and a critique of the Thomist attempt to found relations in the Trinity without employing a distinction *ex natura rei* (i.e. a formal or modal distinction). Baxter's sources for the discussion of persons as absolute principles are John de RIPA, *Lecturae Abbreviatio*, ed. Francis Ruello, Florence, 2000, 1 d. 25-6; Johannes de RADA, *Controversiae Theologicae*, Cologne 1620, 356-9 and Johann Heinrich POSEWITZ, *Theologica-Scholastica*, Helmstedt 1667, I.i.125-8. While Scotus himself changed his mind on this question (Richard CROSS, *Duns Scotus*, Oxford 1999, pp. 65-7), his later followers like de Ripa and de Rada put forward arguments for an absolute treatment of divine personality.

⁷⁴ Richard BAXTER, *The Divine Life in Three Treatises*, London 1663, p. 16.

⁷⁵ For the Franciscan and Scotist influence on Scholarius see Christiaan KAPPES, *The Latin Sources of the Palamite Theology of George-Gennadius Scholarius*, *Rivista Nicolaus* 40, 2013, pp. 71-114.

⁷⁶ BAXTER, *Methodus Theologiae*, I p. 104: "*Credimus ex natura Dei oriri Logon seu Verbum et Spiritum, sicut ex igne lux et calor existit. Et quemadmodum ignis, etiamsi nihil subjiciatur, quod illustretur et calefiat ab ipso, tamen ipse per se semper habet lucem et calorem; et haec ambo emittit ad nos: Eodem modo etiam, antequam fundamenta mundi iacerentur, erant Logus et Spiritus, actiones Dei naturales: Quandoquidem Deus MENS est, sicut antea dictum est. Haec tria, MENS, LOGUS et SPIRITUS, unus DEUS est.*"

Significantly, Scholarius goes on to connect this Trinity of intellectual light to the Power, Wisdom and Love of God as found both in himself and expressed in creation. In doing so he helped Baxter to forge an important connection between the intrinsic motion of the Triune light of God and its extrinsic manifestation in the world.

For Baxter, as for Comenius, creation could therefore be conceived in some sense as a raying out of light from the Trinity. Like Comenius, and also strongly influenced by Campanella, he sees all of creation in terms of a cascade of triads down from the Power, Wisdom and Love. In this he says “the universe of things must be conceived as if flowing from the divine essence and free divine will by continuous emanation.”⁷⁷ This dependence of all things on God also expresses itself as the interdependence of all things on each other. Drawing on the analogy of the World-Tree, also used by Comenius, he argues that all creatures are like branches issuing from a single universal trunk. The unity-in-multiplicity of the universe can thus be seen as an image of the fertile unity of its Creator.⁷⁸ Indeed, drawing implicitly on a Platonic view, Baxter conceives the universe itself as a ladder of being ascending up to God himself, in which the higher nature is said to eminently contain the lower and the lower nature to image the higher. In this way creation clearly resembles Patrizi’s and Comenius’ descending “chain of lights,” although here Comenius’ dynamic ontology of enfolding and unfolding has been visibly shifted towards a purely analogical relationship.⁷⁹

Nevertheless, Baxter still remains deeply committed to a Trinitarian exemplarism. Going beyond Comenius he directly references not only Campanella and Ramon de Sebonde, but also Lull and the Lullist tradition as important influences on his Trinitarian thought.⁸⁰ At the same time, Baxter’s Trinitarian exemplarism is definitively filtered through a Scotist lens. Like Scotus, he therefore forges an important connection between the Trinity, the triune image of God in the soul and the transcendental affections of being. Indeed, reflecting the Trinity he describes the difference between being and its attributes of unity, truth and goodness as being characterised by a Scotist formal distinction.⁸¹ In this we can see an important resemblance to Comenius whose own account of the

⁷⁷ BAXTER, *Methodus Theologiae*, I p. 128: “*Rerum universitas concipienda est quasi ab essentia, et libera voluntate divina emanatione continua, vel quasi continuata creatione profluens.*”

⁷⁸ BAXTER, *Methodus Theologiae*, I p. 131; cf. COMENIUS, *Delineatio*, 30-4, in *Pansophiae Diatyposis*, pp. 120-6.

⁷⁹ Richard BAXTER, *Of the Immortality of Mans Soul*, London 1682, I p. 71. Baxter was deeply familiar with Patrizi’s metaphysics of light and cites him, although not always uncritically, on a number of occasions (e.g. BAXTER, *Methodus Theologiae*, I pp. 80, 139). The notion of a chain of lights can be connected to Arthur LOVEJOY, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea*, Cambridge MA, 1978, the classic discussion of the notion of the “chain of being” in Western thought.

⁸⁰ See Richard BAXTER, *The Reasons of the Christian Religion*, London 1671, p. 374 and *A Treatise of Knowledge and Love Compared*, London 1689, p. 48. For a detailed account of the influence of Lullism on Baxter see BURTON, *Hallowing of Logic*, pp. 55-63, 83-88.

⁸¹ BAXTER, *Methodus Theologiae*, I pp. 90, 167. Baxter’s main source for his Scotistic doctrine of the transcendentals is Julius Caesar SCALIGER, *Exotericarum Exercitationum Liber Quintus Decimus, De Subtilitate ad Hieronymum Cardanum*, Paris 1557, ex. 307.15. Leo ELDERS, *The Metaphysics of Being of St*

transcendentals, as Matthias Scherbaum points out, is Scotistic in character.⁸² Yet Baxter proves surprisingly reluctant to employ this parallel between the Trinity and the affections of being in his wider metaphysics. His account of the transcendentals therefore has an economy and closure utterly foreign to Comenius' open-ended dynamism. Indeed, his reduction of space and time to mere relations, which in Nominalist fashion he also collapses into their absolutes, clearly prevents him from developing a comprehensive, Comenian Trinitarian metaphysics.⁸³

Despite his (partial) withdrawal from Comenius' metaphysics, Baxter was strongly influenced by Comenius' account of light as an active agent of creation, which was also apparent in the theological physics of his close friend Matthew Hale.⁸⁴ Following Comenius, but also of course the wider tradition of light metaphysics and "Mosaic Philosophy," he held that God created light in the form of fire as an active agent to shape and form the passive matter of air, water and earth. Indeed, through the activity of light he held its triune virtue to become impressed in matter itself. Notably, however, Baxter isolated matter, just as he had also detached space and time, from direct participation in this trinitarian dynamic. In this he arguably subscribes to a more dualist ontology than Comenius, in which the division between passive matter and active light and spirit has not yet been fully resolved into an ontological spectrum of light shading into darkness.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, there still remains an important sense in which all the processes of the physical universe, if not all of its constituents, can be understood as a triune unfolding of the activity of light.

The differences we have begun to highlight all serve to indicate Baxter's unease with important aspects of the emanation model.⁸⁶ For Comenius, as we have seen, it followed from the self-diffusive nature of light that creation was in some way necessary to God. While Baxter sometimes employs a similar line of argument, arguing, for example, that matter alone can hardly be regarded as the "most perfect image of divine vitality, activity or love,"⁸⁷ he remains very careful to distinguish the necessity of God's own essence from his freedom in creating. Indeed, although always extremely cautious

Thomas Aquinas in a Historical Perspective, Leiden 1993, pp. 59-66 points out that Scotus, by contrast to Aquinas, explicitly connected the transcendentals to the Trinity.

⁸² Matthias SCHERBAUM, *Der Metaphysikbegriff des Johann Amos Comenius: Das Projekt der Pansophie im Spannungsbogen von "Realismus", Heilsgeschichte und Pan-Paideia*, Oberhaid 2008, p. 154.

⁸³ BAXTER, *Methodus Theologiae*, I p. 125. For Baxter's Nominalist treatment of relations see *Methodus Theologiae*, I pp. 91-2. This draws on Peter Hurtado de Mendoza, *Disputationum a Summulis ad Metaphysicam*, Toulouse, 1618, IV pp. 717-45.

⁸⁴ For the influence of Comenius' physics on Hale and Baxter see CROMARTIE, *Sir Matthew Hale*, p. 202 and SYTSMA, *Baxter's Philosophical Polemics*, pp. 135-6, 142-3. Richard BAXTER, *Christian Directory*, London 1673, III q. 173 (p. 919) expressed his appreciation for Comenius' physics as having "much that is of worth" even though it came "far short of accurateness."

⁸⁵ For a concise overview of Baxter's hexaemeral physics see BAXTER, *Methodus Theologiae*, I pp. 124-5 and *Reasons*, pp. 415-16. For his sharp distinction between active and passive natures and his isolation of the latter from Trinitarian participation see BAXTER, *Immortality*, I pp. 6-7, 37, 92, 99 and *Methodus Theologiae*, I pp. 5-6.

⁸⁶ Richard BAXTER, *The Reduction of a Digressor*, London 1654, p. 32 cautions against the language of emanation in theology, referring to the "ill use many in these times have made of the doctrine of emanation".

⁸⁷ BAXTER, *Methodus Theologiae*, I pp. 133-4.

about applying categories of necessity and contingency to divine actions,⁸⁸ his own answer to the vexed scholastic question of “whether God is able to do more than that which he does?” was explicit: God’s power was not inactive in eternity when he made nothing, nor is it inactive when he does not make all that he can make, nor would it have been inactive if he had never created anything at all. Fascinatingly, Baxter here turns Comenius’ metaphysics of light against itself, arguing that “if the SUN itself should emit its own rays into the vacuum (with no other creatures existing) it would be no less its activity than it is now when it moves, illuminates and heats inferior things.”⁸⁹

By contrast to Comenius, for whom they form the centrepiece of his pansophia, Baxter also withdraws from the divine ideas. Certainly, there was no place in his thought for any kind of mean between Creator and created, a position which excludes Comenius’ secondary divine ideas and casts some doubt on the existence of the Platonic World Soul, another idea favoured by Comenius.⁹⁰ In fact Baxter’s own preference was clearly to reject the divine ideas with the Nominalists.⁹¹ Thus although he confessed himself a Realist about universals it is notable that he says nothing about how these are grounded in the divine understanding.⁹² Moreover, while it is clear that the triune virtue of creatures must be impressed by the Trinity, Baxter, unlike Comenius, refuses to speculate on how this can be. Intriguingly, Baxter again qualifies what he means with a reference to the metaphysics of light, saying that “just as the Sun is not changed by ideas or species of things, when its influxes are terminated on all inferior things, so the divine intellect does not receive diversities or mutations into itself, from objects known terminatively.”⁹³ Moreover, where Comenius had identified possibility with the fecundity of the divine essence itself, Baxter held with the Nominalists that possibility, in itself, is properly nothing.⁹⁴

Baxter’s qualifications of the metaphysics of light, and especially his effective rejection of the divine ideas, raises the important question of how he construes the presence of the Trinity in creation. Citing with approbation Marsilio Ficino’s understanding of God as the “centre of all things” around which revolve the four circles of mind, soul, nature and matter, he yet adds the vital clarification that this is

⁸⁸ Richard BAXTER, *Richard Baxters Catholick Theologie*, London 1675, I.i pp. 20-22.

⁸⁹ BAXTER, *Methodus Theologiae*, I p. 38: “Si SOL ipse emanationes suas emitteret in vacuo, (nulla alia existente creatura) non minor esset eius activitas, quam iam est cum inferiora movet, illuminat et calefacit.”

⁹⁰ BAXTER, *Methodus Theologiae*, I pp. 128, 136-7; cf. COMENIUS, *Synopsis*, 2 (pp. 18-21). However, Baxter does leave open the possibility that God could create such a universal spirit.

⁹¹ BAXTER, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i pp. 7, 17-19 critiques both Thomist and Scotist doctrine of the ideas. BAXTER, *Methodus*, I pp. 40-1 makes explicit his approval for a Nominalist doctrine of divine knowledge.

⁹² Baxter’s position on universals can be extracted from texts such as Richard BAXTER, *An Answer to Dr. Tullies Angry Letter*, London 1675, 40; *Immortality*, II pp. 56-7; *Reasons*, p. 573; and especially *Methodus Theologiae*, I p. 190. Baxter’s use of the term *haecceity* and his discussion of formalities in relation to universals suggest that he espoused a form of Scotist Realism.

⁹³ BAXTER, *Methodus Theologiae*, I p. 42: “Sicut SOL non per ideas aut rerum species mutatur, dum in omnia inferiora eius influxus terminatur, ita et simplicissimus intellectus divinus neque diversitates neque mutationes in sese recipit, ex objectis terminative notis.”

⁹⁴ BAXTER, *Methodus Theologiae*, I p. 43. Baxter’s arguments concerning possibility and futurity find precedent in William of OCKHAM, *Ordinatio*, I d. 35 q. 4, in *Opera Philosophica et Theologica*, ed. Gedeon Gál et al., New York 1967-86, IV p. 474.

to be understood metaphorically.⁹⁵ Now it is true that for Comenius too the understanding of God as “centre” is, in the final analysis, metaphorical. Indeed, like Baxter, he argues that all terms about God are metaphorical and thus analogical. However, Comenius’ understanding of metaphor is profoundly dialectical. In Cusan fashion he therefore holds it true to affirm that God is both all things and that he is nothing, that he is known by every name and no name.⁹⁶ By contrast, Baxter, following a Scotist path, eschews such apophaticism.⁹⁷ As much as he is deeply influenced by the metaphysics of light, he therefore ultimately draws back from its radical implications. For him creatures are the image or shadow but not the ray of divine light. One could say therefore that Baxter’s metaphysics of light marks a retreat from ontology to analogy. This is of course not to say that the light metaphysics made no ontological impression on his thought, for clearly Platonic themes of participation and exemplarism remained central to him, but it is to emphasise his attempt to resolve – and even, in a real sense, to dissolve – ontology into analogy.

4. Towards a Trinitarian Method

Comenius and Baxter both developed their Trinitarian metaphysics of light in the context of broader projects. Comenius, of course, was motivated by the desire to develop a universal method which would be adequate to teach all people, all things, in all ways – the goal of his famous pansophia.⁹⁸ Since pansophia was intended to reveal the Trinitarian harmony of all things, thus reorienting humanity to God and restoring his image in the soul of man, it followed that a Trinitarian method was indispensable for him.⁹⁹ Baxter’s own desire to initiate a Trinitarian reformation of theology was no less ambitious in its own sphere. Indeed, since he believed that this could not be achieved without the development of a new Trinitarian logic, natural philosophy and psychology its ultimate scope was

⁹⁵ BAXTER, *Methodus Theologiae*, I p. 148 citing Marsilio FICINO, *Commentarium in Convivium Platonis de Amore*, Florence 1469, II.3.

⁹⁶ COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, t. I pp. 237, 398-9.

⁹⁷ BAXTER, *Methodus Theologiae*, I p. 31. Scotus’ cataphaticism is emphasised by Richard CROSS, *Duns Scotus*, Oxford 1999, chapter 3. The position of Scotus and Baxter contrasts sharply with AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a q. 3.1 saying “we cannot know what God is, but only what he is not.”

⁹⁸ For a clear exposition of this see Jan Amos COMENIUS, *Totius Pansophiae Seminarium*, 1.2-6, in *DJAK* 14, pp. 13-14. HOTSON, *Ramist Roots of Comenian Pansophia* rightly connects this emphasis to a Ramist heritage, but it can also be linked to the encyclopaedic character and universalist ambitions of Lullism.

⁹⁹ The Trinitarian dimension of Comenius’ pansophia has been the emphasis of a number of recent studies including Daniel NEVAL, *Comenius’ Pansophie: Die Dreifache Offenbarung Gottes in Schrift, Natur und Vernunft*, Zürich 2007; Erwin SCHADEL, *Syntagma Pansophicum Triunum: Grundriss der Comenianischen Reform- und Friedensbemühungen*, in: Werner KORTHAASE – Sigurd HAUFF – Andreas FRITSCH (eds.), *Comenius und der Weltfriede*, Berlin 2005, pp. 180-203; RAFFAELLI, *Macht, Weisheit, Liebe*; and KUCHLBAUER, *Antisozinianische Schriften*. For the context of Comenius’ Trinitarian metaphysics in relation to his developing pansophia see Erwin SCHADEL, “Einleitung”, pp. IX-LXXXIII in Jan Amos COMENIUS, *Die Pforte der Dinge: Ianua Rerum*, ed. and tr. Erwin SCHADEL, Hamburg 1989. The transformative character of Comenius’ pansophia is equally well attested, but see especially Dagmar ČAPKOVÁ, *Comenius and his Ideals: Escape from the Labyrinth*, in: Mark GREENGRASS – Michael LESLIE – Timothy RAYLOR (eds.), *Samuel Hartlib and Universal Reformation: Studies in Intellectual Communication*, Cambridge 1994, pp. 75-91 and Howard HOTSON, *The Instauration of the Image of God in Man: Humanist Anthropology, Encyclopaedic Pedagogy, Baconianism and Universal Reform*, in: Margaret PELLING – Scott MANDELBORE (eds.), *The Practice of Reform in Health, Medicine and Science, 1500-2000: Essays for Charles Webster*, Aldershot 2005, pp. 1-21.

scarcely less than the pansophia.¹⁰⁰ Significantly, as mentioned above, Baxter and Comenius shared a Ramist and Lullist heritage. They were therefore convinced that logic had to be grounded in both the natural and divine order, which gave their approach to method an important Realist and exemplaristic impulse.¹⁰¹ In this section I will examine the attempt of both thinkers to develop a Trinitarian method and the manner in which this ultimately diverged.

Comenius' desire, at least since the writing of his *Great Didactic* was to initiate an Augustinian and Scriptural reform of the whole of philosophy.¹⁰² Like other Ramists he sought to implement this programme in a twofold way. Firstly, following the lead of his teacher Piscator he sought to place divine testimony at the heart of method. While it was Ramus who first analysed testimony as a logical argument, it was Piscator who emphasised the role the testimony of Scripture played as a self-authenticating (*autopiston*) logical argument.¹⁰³ From Comenius' earliest works the goal of pansophia is represented as the systematic coordination and harmonisation of everything according to the threefold mode of sense, reason and faith.¹⁰⁴ In later works, especially those following the Anti-Trinitarian controversy, it is clearly divine testimony which has the controlling function. Indeed, his *Triertium Catholicum* explicitly takes up a Ramist template of invention, method and judgement in the analysis of every kind of logical argument, including those drawn explicitly from testimony.¹⁰⁵ Secondly, like late medieval Realists such as John Wyclif and Jan Hus, and Ramists such as Friedrich Beuerhaus and William Ames, Comenius presented method not only as a scriptural logic but also as a logic grounded on the divine ideas themselves.¹⁰⁶ By binding together God, his creation and human understanding, pansophic method was therefore intended to realise the divine order of reality.

At the same time the *Triertium* also demonstrates an important move away from Ramism in Comenius' thought. One of Bartholomäus Keckermann's chief complaints against Ramism had been that invention and judgement were treated as separate parts of logic and not different aspects of the same act of logical reasoning.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, he expressed a definite preference for trichotomy over dichotomy in the handling of logical operations, arguing from the basis of three as a perfect

¹⁰⁰ Baxter's Trinitarian reformation of logic, natural philosophy and psychology are discussed at length in chapters 2-4 of BURTON, *Hallowing of Logic*.

¹⁰¹ There are many statements of this in their work but see, for example, BAXTER, *Methodus Theologiae*, "Praefatio" and COMENIUS, *Pansophiae Prodomus*, pp. 23-4, 42-3, 92-3. The Realist and exemplaristic character of Comenius' pansophia is emphasised by SCHERBAUM, *Metaphysiksbegriff*.

¹⁰² COMENIUS, *Didactica Magna*, 25.18, in *Opera*, col. 154-5.

¹⁰³ Petrus RAMUS, *Institutionum Dialecticarum Libri Duo*, Paris 1560, pp. 103-12 and Johannes PISCATOR, *Animadversiones Ioan. Piscatoris Arg. in Dialecticam P. Rami*, Frankfurt 1582, pp. 114-30.

¹⁰⁴ See, for example, COMENIUS, *Totius Pansophiae Seminarium*, 1.1-3.78 in DJAK 14, pp. 14-41.

¹⁰⁵ COMENIUS, *Triertium Catholicum*, 3.1-9; 9; 10, in DJAK 18, pp. 258-60, 296-303.

¹⁰⁶ COMENIUS, *Delineatio*, 51-4 in *Pansophiae Diatyposis*, pp. 155-60. For the late medieval desire for a scriptural logic grounded on the divine ideas see Ian LEVY, *Scriptural Logic, Real Presence and the Parameters of Orthodoxy*, Milwaukee WI, 2003. For the Ramist project see Perry MILLER, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century*, Cambridge MA, 1954, pp. 111-80. Jan Amos COMENIUS, *Ianua Rerum Reserata*, "Praefatio" 11, in DJAK 18, p. 154 reveals his knowledge of Ames, albeit in a critical perspective.

¹⁰⁷ Bartholomäus KECKERMAN, *Praecognita Logica*, Hanover 1604, pp. 41-4, 220-8.

number.¹⁰⁸ In the *Triertium* we find invention, method and judgement being taken up by Comenius and incorporated into a new Trinitarian account of logic. In this logic represents a kind of “mathesis of thought,” which in Augustinian fashion numbers, measures and weighs all arguments.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, perhaps taking up Keckermann’s complaint about the Ramist attempt to squeeze the Trinity into a series of dichotomies, Comenius argues here that a trichotomous division better fits the Trinitarian order of nature.¹¹⁰

This was in fact a point which Comenius had made as early as 1639 when he argued in his *Pansophiae Prodromus* that “all the principal divisions of things are made by a trichotomy” reflecting the pattern of the one, true and good as the “first attributes of things.”¹¹¹ In the same work Comenius had compared other encyclopaedias to neatly ordered blocks of wood. By contrast, he desired his own pansophia to be like a living tree.¹¹² While the Ramist passion for order was clearly important to Comenius, by itself it was clearly not enough. He saw the need to infuse method with a Trinitarian dynamism and, given his metaphysical background, it is unsurprising that he should have turned to the transcendentals in order to achieve this. In this we are reminded of Ramon Lull who, as Mark Johnston reminds us, made extensive use of his correlatives to give logic a dynamic, Trinitarian character.¹¹³ Indeed, Alsted himself had earlier argued on Lullist grounds that all of method must have a transcendental foundation.¹¹⁴

In the *Triertium* Comenius also made the intriguing claim that all of method must follow the “reason of a circle,” unfolding everything which is enfolded in the essence of things themselves. While this echoes important themes in Alsted, its deepest roots are surely found in Cusa and the coincidence of opposites.¹¹⁵ Indeed, from the *Consultatio Catholica*, it is clear that the Cusan principle of God as the centre of all things has come to underpin his entire pansophia.¹¹⁶ As he succinctly expresses this in the *Panorthosia*:

This, and only this, will be the perfect fundamental basis for the reform of himself and his affairs, to leave the circumferences and the sidetracks of things and return to God, who is their centre and unique basis ... For God himself is the light that pervades and penetrates all things, and it shines especially in him and in man who is his image. If the image faces the

¹⁰⁸ Bartholomäus KECKERMANN, *Systema Logicae Tribus Libris Adornatum*, Hanover 1603, pp. 3-4.

¹⁰⁹ COMENIUS, *Triertium Catholicum*, 3.9, in DJAK 18, p. 260.

¹¹⁰ COMENIUS, *Triertium Catholicum*, 9, in DJAK 18, p. 287.

¹¹¹ COMENIUS, *Pansophiae Prodromus*, pp. 92-3.

¹¹² COMENIUS, *Pansophiae Prodromus*, p. 41.

¹¹³ Mark JOHNSTON, *The Spiritual Logic of Ramon Llull*, Oxford 1987, pp. 101-6, 114-17.

¹¹⁴ Johann Heinrich ALSTED, *Panacea Philosophica; id est, Facilis, Nova et Accurata Methodus Docendi et Discendi Universam Encyclopaediam*, Herborn 1610, pp. 17-18.

¹¹⁵ COMENIUS, *Triertium Catholicum*, 3.22 in DJAK 18, pp. 262-3. See Johann Heinrich ALSTED, *Metaphysica Tribus Libris Tractata*, Herborn 1616, “Praefatio” where Alsted compares the relation of the encyclopaedia to particular arts and sciences to that of the centre of the circle and its radii.

¹¹⁶ See, for example, COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, t. I pp. 201, 219, 246-7, 398-9.

source of light, it lives in the light, but if it turns away, it falls into the shadows which in time give way to darkness.¹¹⁷

In this we clearly see the connection between Comenius' method and the metaphysics of light. Indeed, Jan Rohls has rightly drawn our attention to the character of pansophia as a kind of Platonic ascent to the light of God.¹¹⁸

At the same time we should also recall Comenius' foundational account of the possible world, which establishes an important parallel between creation and conceptualisation. Echoing Cusa, Comenius therefore claimed as early as his *Great Didactic* that the human mind, as the image of God, enfolds all of reality within itself. It only requires the light of the senses to unfold this potential knowledge into actual cognition.¹¹⁹ In his later *Consultatio* he extends this suggestion, arguing that the mind centring itself on God therefore discovers the unity and coincidence of all created lights in God as it becomes flooded with the light of divine omniscience – an important extension of what Hotson has discerned as a wider Ramist interest in the instauration of the image of God.¹²⁰ Yet such a centring is at the same time also a withdrawal from the circumference of one's own self-centredness. It is therefore simultaneously a nulliscience – a knowledge of nothing, or rather of the nothingness of everything in relation to God. It is in fact the realisation of Cusa's own "learned ignorance."¹²¹

In his *Pansophiae Diatyposis* Comenius had expressed a desire that pansophia should be able to reconcile all contradictions.¹²² Following his Anti-Socinian controversy he came to realise that a Christian understanding of God, expressing the proper elevation of faith over reason, could only be grounded on the coincidence of opposites. Indeed, developing a theme which was largely implicit in Cusa himself, Comenius came to understand Scripture itself as encoding this coincidence of

¹¹⁷ COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, t. 2 p. 250: "Hoc demum perfectae Emendationis Sui, et Rerum, ima et perfectissima basis erit. A seipso, et Rerum circumferentiis ac ambagibus redisse in Deum, rerum centrum, basinque unicum ... Ipse enim Deus lux est omnia permeans et penetrans, lucensque imprimis in semet ipso et Imagine sua. Quae si se a fonte suo non avertit, in luce est: si avertit, in umbras incidit, quae in tenebras tandem desinunt." Translation modified from Jan Amos COMENIUS, *Panorthosia or Universal Reform: Chapters 1 to 18 and 27*, tr. A. M. O. Dobbie, Sheffield 1995, 7.11-12 (p. 107).

¹¹⁸ ROHLS, *Comenius, Light Metaphysics and Educational Reform*, pp. 63-74.

¹¹⁹ COMENIUS, *Didactica Magna*, 5.5, 6.1-5, in *Opera*, col. 27, 34-5 and *Totius Pansophiae Seminarium*, 71-8, in *DJAK* 14, pp. 38-41. For the discussion of the mind enfolding all things see Nicholas of CUSA, *Idiota de Mente*, 2.58-4.75 (*NCOO* V, pp. 92-115). There is also a clear parallel with Nicholas of CUSA, *De Quaerendo Deum*, 1.31-2.37 (*NCOO* IV, pp. 22-7) but this text may not have been known to Comenius.

¹²⁰ COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, t. I p. 201. COMENIUS, *Didactica Magna*, 5.4, in *Opera*, col. 27 explicitly teaches that the human mind should be the image of the divine omniscience. See further HOTSON, *Instauration of the Image of God*, pp. 1-21.

¹²¹ COMENIUS, *Pansophiae Diatyposis*, 16, 65 (pp. 16, 80). Jan Amos COMENIUS, *Pansophiae Christianae Liber III*, Can. 32, in *DJAK* 14, p. 73 and *Triertium Catholicum*, 5.7, in *DJAK* 18, p. 272 specifically employ the Cusan term of *docta ignorantia*. This itself had its roots in Augustine who may be Comenius' immediate source here (cf. AUGUSTINE of Hippo, *Epistolae*, 130, in: Jacques-Paul MIGNE (ed.), *Patrologia Latina Cursus Completus*, Paris, 1844-55, 33 col. 505).

¹²² COMENIUS, *Pansophiae Diatyposis*, 14 (pp. 13-14). Comenius' discussion here of the need for a method of "neither and both" takes up language which is used in COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, t. I p. 481 to illustrate Cusa's coincidence of opposites.

opposites. What he called in his 1660 *De Irenico Irenicorum* the “more divine logic which contemplates the affections of infinite being”, contrasting this logic of “transnaturals and eternal” to the natural logic of Aristotle rooted in the principle of non-contradiction, was thus the ultimate fulfilment of his lifelong Augustinian and Ramist quest for a scriptural logic.¹²³ In this the mystery of the Triune God, revealed in both nature and Scripture but exceeding every human reason, becomes itself the pattern for all human knowledge, inspiring both gratitude and awed humility.

Baxter shared Comenius’ desire for a scriptural reform of philosophy. Indeed, the publication of his *Methodus Theologiae* marked the culmination of a quest for method which had occupied Baxter for nearly forty years. While in his youth Baxter had been an ardent Ramist, by the 1640s he had become convinced that Ramism alone was inadequate, to give a truly Trinitarian account of reality. As he later recalled:

For a long time I believed every legitimate division to be bimembered; and I was greatly inclined to dichotomy... When truly method is to be based on a real subject, for the most part I feel trichotomy is to be preferred. For the Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity are clearly impressed by God himself in all his nobler, active works. But method is from things... If therefore I should not observe this Trinity in Unity in the things to be explained, this would not be a true explanation.¹²⁴

In this we are clearly reminded of Comenius. In fact, as remarked on above, it was his reading of both Campanella and Comenius that stimulated him in his own quest for a new method.¹²⁵

As becomes clear from the *Methodus*, Baxter’s own Trinitarian method was centred on Campanella’s and Comenius’ divine principles of Power, Wisdom and Love. Of course Baxter’s own antipathy to divine ideas prevented him from developing his exemplaristic logic along those lines. Also, despite his own Scotistic and Trinitarian approach to the transcendentals, he surprisingly did not use these as a methodological template. Instead, Baxter drew on Protestant covenantal theory and specifically the *Theo-Politica* of his friend George Lawson, published in 1659. For it was the Ramist Lawson who inspired him to an analysis of theology on the basis of the Christian believer’s baptismal covenant with the Trinity. Specifically, Baxter held that God’s Triune character as Power, Wisdom and Love

¹²³ COMENIUS, *De Irenico Irenicorum*, pp. 72, 197.

¹²⁴ BAXTER, *Methodus Theologiae*, “Praefatio”: “Ex hisce omnibus patet quare trichotomiam eligo. Diu credidi omnem legitimam divisionem esse bimembrem; et ad dichotomiam maxime propendebam... Quando vero a re subjecta sumenda est methodus plerumque trichotomiam praeferendam sentio. Trinitas enim in Unitate, et Unitas in Trinitate a Deo ipso in omnia sua opera nobiliora activa clare impressa sunt. A rebus autem methodus est. Hoc sicut Campanella, D. Glissonus et scholasticorum plurimi observarunt, ita per totum patefacere ego conatus sum.... Non mirum est igitur si eius vestigia per totam doctrinam S. Scripturae, et in Dei imagine in fidelibus sanctificatis, et in officiis Christianis, et in tota oeconomia evangelica inveniuntur. Si igitur in rebus ipsis explicandis hanc Trinitatem in Unitate non observarem, vera non esset explicatio.”

¹²⁵ BAXTER, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, III pp. 69-70.

meant that he related to humanity in the role of Lord, Ruler and Benefactor. Drawing on this insight he was able to integrate his Comenian metaphysical framework into a much broader, covenantal understanding of the relation between God and humanity. In this we see another shift away from the metaphysics of light, with Baxter's own Trinitarian method becoming centred on the unfolding of the divine will more than the unfolding of the divine being.¹²⁶

Like Comenius, Baxter intended method to be transformative. Drawing on a long tradition of Christian reflection, he was clear that faith as a form of elevated reason transcended ordinary, natural reason. He further argued that, in order to apprehend God and divine matters, fallen human reason required both a healing and elevating encounter with objective truth, something which he believed could only come about through the Trinitarian action of Word and Spirit on the individual soul. For Baxter this entailed that logic itself must be transformed and in-formed through this encounter, taking on the Trinitarian shape of objective truth itself. In this way human reason becomes sanctified – hallowed – through faith, elevating it to an apprehension of the Triune God in himself and in his works of Creation, Redemption and Sanctification.¹²⁷ For Baxter this transformation in itself implies an important disjunction between ordinary logic and that which is necessary to describe the Trinity. Drawing on the fourteenth-century English scholastic Robert Holcot, and echoing a similar point made by his friend Lawson, he argued that “the rational logic of faith ought to be different from natural logic.” For philosophers do not see how a thing can be both one and three simultaneously and their rules of logic do not account for this. However, the logic of faith, which is drawn from Scripture, institutes a different, higher pattern of reasoning adequate for the Trinity.¹²⁸

In Baxter's Trinitarian logic of faith we are reminded strongly of Comenius' attempt to ground pansophia on the coincidence of opposites. Certainly, both recognised that taken together, the infinite and Triune nature of God, the two natures of Christ and the testimony of Scripture all pointed the way towards an entirely different approach to logic. However, Holcot's own logic of faith remained entirely bounded by the principle of non-contradiction and there is no reason to think any differently of Baxter's own appropriation of it.¹²⁹ Indeed, even in his discussion of the failure of the syllogistic rules with respect to the divine infinity, Baxter remains entirely within the scholastic paradigm, citing

¹²⁶ For an in-depth account of this see BURTON, *Hallowing of Logic*, pp. 72-93.

¹²⁷ See Richard BAXTER, *An End of Doctrinal Controversies*, London 1691, xxxiii and *Methodus Theologiae*, I pp. 17-24.

¹²⁸ BAXTER, *Methodus Theologiae*, I p. 93 citing Robert HOLCOT, *In Quatuor Libros Sententiarum Quaestiones*, Lyon 1518, repr. Frankfurt 1967, 1 q. 5 ad. 5. For the context of Holcot's logic of faith in late medieval discussions over faith and reason see Michael SHANK, *Unless you Believe, You shall not Understand: Logic, University and Society in Late-Medieval Vienna*, Princeton NJ 1988 and GELBER, *Logic and the Trinity*, pp. 265-72. For the Scriptural and Ramistic aspects of this see George LAWSON, *Theo-Politica*, London 1659, pp. 19-20.

¹²⁹ GELBER, *Logic and the Trinity*, pp. 265-72.

passages from Scotus, Capreolus and Cajetan.¹³⁰ Although he certainly knew Nicholas of Cusa, any notion of the coincidence of opposites seems to have been entirely off his radar.¹³¹ In this we are therefore brought back to the central difference between Baxter and Comenius: their divergent scholastic and Neo-Platonic approaches to the mystery of the Triune God.

¹³⁰ BAXTER, *Methodus Theologiae*, I p. 93.

¹³¹ At the end of his life Baxter owned works by Lull, Sebonde, Campanella, Comenius and Cusa himself. For Baxter's Neo-Platonic collection see Geoffrey NUTTALL, *A Transcript of Richard Baxter's Library Catalogue: A Bibliographical Note*, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 2, 1951, pp. 210, 211, 217, 218, 220 and *A Transcript of Richard Baxter's Library Catalogue (Concluded)*, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 3, 1952, pp. 87, 94, 98, 99.